

400k:
Ted Taylor's last disarmament project

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In China one likes to say that every time a God closes a door, He opens another one.

Ted Taylor died the 28th of October, the day before my son's 20th anniversary.

My son was born with several severe handicaps: mongolism, inoperable heart defect, kidney problems, and epilepsy. His life expectancy was of a few years at most, and his survival is considered at Geneva's University Hospital as a kind of a "miracle."

My son's name is Olivier (the "wise"), who in the French Middle age tradition was the companion of Roland (the "courageous"), and which since ancient Greece refers to a symbol for peace and conciliation. I intentionally chose this name because my main interest and activity at the time (1984) was peace research.

In 1991, after the first American intervention in Iraq, I wanted to write a book on my experience and disillusion about the way Iraq's nuclear weapons program was used and misused by the Western countries as a political tool to justify intervention in the Middle East (see my files, "Iraq's calutrons 1991-2002" <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Iraq/Calutron.html>). The title of this book was to be "The Planet of the Mongols." This was because I wanted to explain that if there was little hope with the so-considered "sane" people on this planet, experience with so-called "disabled" people told me that a genetic mutation like trisomia-21 (mongolism) was probably necessary to reason the human race, so that peace would no more be a taboo, but become a possible reality.

In October 1996, when I met Ted Taylor for the first time in person (I had occasionally corresponded with him since the late 1970's) we had a big brain storming in my Geneva office. We discussed many things related to nuclear disarmament,

and tried to share our experience, especially on the relatively little impact of "early scientific warning in arms control" on the actual course of events. Iraq's case was particularly on my mind, since I was just in the process of trying to publish a paper related to it (see <http://nuketesting.enviroweb.org/hew/Iraq/andre/ISRI-96-06.pdf>).

Ted Taylor had an idea: "If professionally competent scientists from several countries, as well as professional diplomats with first-hand experience on nuclear disarmament negotiations, would create a high-level but truly independent international organization, it could be that this organization would have some real influence on the political decision makers!"

This is how the project of a "Center for Independent Scientific Competence on Nuclear Weapons" (CISCNW) was born, a confidential project of which a few people on the 400k mailing list were informed of.

To my great surprise, Ted Taylor's project was much more successful than I expected.

Very quickly I was working full time on it. All through 1997 I traveled abroad, wrote tens of letters, met with high level diplomats and senior nuclear weapons designers from countries all over the world, including, China, Russia, Pakistan, India, etc. I also met with Ted Taylor several times, as well as with prominent American former/present nuclear weapons designers/experts to whom I was introduced by him.

In an amazing upwards spiraling process the project started getting official interest and support from more and more declared and undeclared nuclear weapons States. The first progress report was issued in January 1998. (A PDF copy of this four-page long report it attached to this e-mail.)

Unfortunately, after the Indian nuclear tests of May 1998, the CISCNW-project collapsed. From nuclear negotiation the world started drifting towards nuclear confrontation, as is confirmed by what is happening today, from North Korea to Japan, from Iran to Brazil, from the USA to Iraq, ... and the worse is still to come!

Does it mean that Ted Taylor's last project collapsed because of the Indian nuclear tests? If you ask the Indians they would probably claim that it collapsed because of the American's attitude in the CTBT negotiations...

Meanwhile, there remains a large file of documents related to this disarmament project, with substantial contributions by people who worked on the Manhattan project, or some of the latest bomb programs worldwide, which I keep as an evidence that hope for nuclear disarmament may reawake one day, possibly when a new "Ted Taylor" will arise.